

Arts Education Equity in Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Arts Education Facts & Figures

Over the last decade, access to high-quality arts programming has risen 179% (increasing from 14% to 39%) resulting in:

- **150+ more CPS schools are now rated Excelling** in the arts than a decade ago.
- **96,000 more** students now have access to Excelling schools.
- **44%** of CPS students attend an Excelling school.

HOWEVER:

- **One-fifth (67,474¹)** of CPS students **do not yet have robust access to arts** courses, with the majority of these schools residing in high-need, low-income communities.
- Of **students who do not** have robust access to high-quality arts programming, **51% are Black, 41% Latine, and 79% are economically disadvantaged.**

Arts Education in Chicago: Key Points

- 1. Historical Context:** In 2012, the [Chicago Cultural Plan](#) was developed with extensive input from cultural, civic, and community groups, as well as thousands of residents from every neighborhood in Chicago. This widespread public engagement highlighted a strong community desire for revitalizing arts education in the city's public schools.
- 2. Initial Response:** In May 2012, the CPS Department of Arts Education, in collaboration with Ingenuity and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), launched the district's first comprehensive [Arts Education Plan](#). The plan provided key recommendations on staffing, instructional time, professional development, arts integration, and partnerships, aiming to enhance access and equity in arts education across all schools.
- 3. Significant Progress:** Over the past decade, access to high-quality arts programming has surged by 138% (from 29% to 69%), benefiting over 230,000 students. Additionally, the percentage of CPS schools meeting the recommended staffing ratio of one teacher per 350 students has increased by 43% (from 51% to 73%).
- 4. Ongoing Challenges:** Despite these advances, nearly one-third of CPS students (83,000) still lack robust access to arts courses. A disproportionate number of these students are in high-need, low-income communities, with 93% being Black or Latine and 82%

¹ This figure includes race_enrollment from schools rated Developing/Emerging.



economically disadvantaged. Many of these schools are smaller, with average enrollments of 431 in elementary schools and 356 in high schools.

5. **New! CPS Arts Ed Plan Launched:** In March 2024, with Ingenuity's support, CPS began developing the [CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity](#), aimed at helping students explore their identities, ignite their passions, and experience the joy of creative expression. The new plan was approved by the Chicago Board of Education in Spring 2025 and launched in the Fall 2025 school year.
6. **Looking Ahead:** Since the launch of the CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0 in the Fall of 2025, Ingenuity has already made meaningful progress in advancing the Plan's commitments alongside CPS, arts partners, educators, and community stakeholders. Through expanded partner engagement, investments in teaching artists, strengthened data systems, and ongoing advocacy, we are helping build the conditions necessary to ensure every CPS student can access high-quality arts education that supports creativity, identity, and joyful learning

How Can the CPS Board of Education Support Arts Education?

1. **Champion the Successful Implementation of the CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity**

As the district enters the second year of implementation, the new Board of Education can play a critical role in sustaining momentum behind the Plan. Continued board leadership and public support will help ensure the Plan's commitments translate into long-term, district-wide impact for students, schools, and communities.
2. **Expand Partnerships to Ensure Equitable Access to Arts Education**

Strengthen collaboration with Ingenuity and the broader arts education sector to ensure every CPS student has access to high-quality arts learning opportunities. While significant progress has been made, too many students still lack consistent access to robust arts programming. The new board can help prioritize equity-centered investments and partnerships that close remaining gaps.
3. **Support Sustainable Systems for Arts Partners and Schools**

Work alongside CPS, Ingenuity, and arts partners to strengthen systems that support high-quality arts learning, including procurement processes, funding structures, professional learning opportunities, and public data transparency. Clear, accessible, and equitable systems are essential to maintaining a thriving arts education ecosystem across Chicago.
4. **Invest in Long-Term Arts Education Infrastructure**

Continue to support sustained investment in arts staffing, instructional resources, teaching artist engagement, and school-community partnerships so that arts education is not treated as supplemental, but as a core component of a well-rounded education for every student in every neighborhood.



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Ingenuity is dedicated to guiding and uniting our city to improve access, quality, and equity in arts education for all CPS students. Strong arts programs boost engagement, attendance, test scores, and overall academic success, improving social interactions. Through our initiatives, we've enabled 82,000 more CPS students to engage with the arts. However, 83,000 students in CPS still lack access to quality arts programs. Help us ensure every student can benefit from the arts. Empower students to create, flourish, and embrace the arts' transformative power. Support us today at ingenuity.givecloud.co/give.